

OFFICIAL MINUTES FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING OF THE  
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED  
ARKANSAS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

The Board of Trustees for the Arkansas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Arkansas School for the Deaf met for their monthly meeting September 21, 2021.

**Present:** Dr. John McAllister, Chair; Dr. Samuel Atcherson, Vice-Chair; Susan Pack, Board Member; Rob Fagan, Board Member; James Caton, ASBVI Superintendent; Dr. Janet Dickinson, ASD Superintendent; Holley Mott, ASD Parent Representative; Jonathan Smith, Will Goram and Eddie Schmeckenbecher (for Dr. Dickinson), Interpreters; Members of the Deaf Community; Members of the Blind Community

**Absent:** Faith McLaughlin, Secretary and Dr. Priya Gupta, ASBVI Parent Representative

Dr. John McAllister called the meeting to order at 5:03. The next meeting was scheduled for October 12, 2021 at the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

### **Joint Agenda**

#### **21-J-015 Motion to Approve Joint August, 2021 Minutes**

Mr. Fagan moved to approve, Dr. Atcherson seconded. Motion passed.

#### **Action Items**

##### **Organizational Charts**

Mr. Caton said it is a work in progress as it changes about every week with open positions. He brought attention to the Shared Services section – some areas have a more direct line to the Department of Education where others are more local between the two superintendents. Dr. Dickinson said they had pictures with their chart. She thought they wanted more focus on who the Superintendent supervises directly. The first page has the staff that reports to the Superintendent. The second page is Shared Services that she and James share. The next page is also Shared Services – Business Office, Human Resources and IT – some report to ADE and some to ASD.

##### **Shared Services**

Dr. McAllister asked how Shared Services was going. Mr. Caton said he and Janet continue to meet with the teams every other Monday soliciting their feedback and seeing what issues there might be. The areas as far as they are able to assess are flowing pretty smoothly overall in his opinion. The biggest one is the logistics they are still trying to develop is Health Services. It is a complicated area when two schools are involved. He said as nice as the building is, it wasn't designed for two schools.

### Shared Services Continued

If he had known 3 years ago it was going to be shared, there are things that would have been done differently to serve two schools/student groups. It is a little tight in terms of storage and traffic flow because of the size of the building. Vicki and her team have been working through the issues as they have come up. He thinks it is going to be very beneficial.

Dr. Dickinson said she would be in support of that. She said they have had some bumpiness with each group. Some things are smoothing out and some things are not.

### Mask Mandate

Dr. McAllister asked how it was working. Dr. Dickinson said the kids are very accustomed to the masks. They still don't like it but the decision by the board really depends on what is happening statewide in regards to the number of COVID cases and they fluctuate. ASD's staff and students are going to do whatever they need to do to keep safe.

Mr. Caton said everyone continues to wear their masks appropriately. It is something everyone is accustomed to from last year. He hasn't received any negative feedback from staff, students or parents. This afternoon he received an email from a parent in support of extending the mask mandate. He read the email. His recommendation would be to continue over the next month and review at next meeting.

Ms. Pack asked Eddie what the numbers were today. Eddie said it was 1401. He said Johnny Key some schools are taking it down and others are bringing back the mandate.

### **21-J-016 Motion to Extend the Mask Mandate**

Mrs. Pack moved to extend the mask mandate. Mr. Fagan seconded. The motion passed

Mrs. Pack said she thought the children would rather be back in school with a mask than at home.

### **Discussion Items – None**

There being no further business of Joint nature, the agenda moved to the Arkansas School for the Deaf.

### **Arkansas School for the Deaf**

### **21-D-016 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement & Personnel Items)**

Mrs. Pack moved to approve. Mr. Fagan seconded. Motion passed.

Dr. McAllister asked Dr. Dickinson if she had any comments on the personnel. Dr. Dickinson said she would like to hold comments until they go into Executive Session.

## **Action Items**

### **Minority Recruitment Plans for ASD/ASB**

Dr. Dickinson said the Minority Report shows how we are looking and assessing at recruiting minorities at our school. They have a plan and percentages of the numbers ASD have on their staff now. They have diversity in the school. ASD was over 40% deaf and hard of hearing that were hired. It is important that ASD believes in hiring deaf and hard of hearing people.

Mr. Caton said the plan that has been turned in over the years is changing in its format.

Had the option of continuing to use the original format.

Format not changing dramatically – putting more emphasis on the recruitment part and encouraging minorities to enter the education field.

ASB adopted the new format. Next year it has to be put on the website. There is a new signature page for it.

ASB listed their goals for recruitment and a section on students pursuing careers in education

ASB is inviting monthly guest speakers from the education field to talk to the students

Data and demographic breakdowns are included in report

The Minority Recruitment Plan has to be signed by the President and Secretary of the board.

Signatures were acquired.

### **21-D-017/21-B-016 Motion to Approve Federal Programs Assurances & Minority Recruitment Plans for ASD/ASB**

Mrs. Pack moved to approve. Mr. Fagan seconded. Motion passed

## **Discussion Items**

### **Annual Report to the Public**

Every year they are required to give a Report to the Public. Dr. Dickinson will give ASD's report Homecoming weekend. She said there was a lot of work put into the report from all departments. She went over the report for the board.

### **Annual Report on Bullying**

The Bullying report is also a requirement.

Report the number of incidences/bullying and actions that were taken

There were 3 incidences

The policy is posted on the website as required and also in the Student Handbook

### **21-D-018 Motion to Approve the Annual Report to the Public and the Bullying Report**

Mr. Fagan moved to approve. Dr. Atcherson seconded. The motion passed.

## Superintendent Report

Dr. Dickinson started by showing a film about the dorms. She is proud of the work the staff has done.

Staff built a huge playhouse

Homecoming is scheduled for 10/9/2021

Each department has developed an action plan related to the strategic plan

She presented all of the things happening at ASD at Secretary Key's First Friday meeting

Held Town Hall meeting

Student Education is the #1 goal this year

Started Stay Interviews with staff

Two additions to the Mental Health team

Eddie has a strong background in mental health – does a great job leading that team

ASD has approximately 40 interpreting assignments a week

Educational Leadership team is leading a new initiative related to professional learning cycle

Department of Education came to tour

Working on grants for Perkins – appreciate Kevin Lentz for his work on the grants

Leopard News updated with a new design – comes out on Wednesdays

Increased number of Facebook posts

9 new students at the start of school

ECC program is doing great-learning about school by reading the story "Froggy Goes to School"

High school visited UALR on 9/15

ELEVATE is for young adults 18-25 who have graduated high school and are engaged in post-secondary training. ADCC is doing great workshops, internships on campus and off, and independent living skills

There being no further business for the Arkansas School for the Deaf, the agenda moved to the Arkansas School for the Blind.

### **Arkansas School for the Blind**

#### **21-B-017 Motion to Approve Consent Items (Minutes, Financial Statement, Personnel Items)**

Dr. Atcherson moved to approve. Mr. Fagan seconded. The motion passed.

#### **Action Items**

#### **21-B-018 Motion to Approve 2021-2022 Statement of Assurances**

Mr. Caton stated these are the assurances that the school is in compliance with all State laws for accreditation. Once uploaded, it will clear a lot of red flags.

Mrs. Pack moved to approve. Dr. Atcherson seconded. Motion passed.

### **21-B-019 Motion to Approve Library Materials Policy**

Mr. Caton said the policy we have has been in place for a number of years. Mrs. Maranda Cole, Library Specialist, said the policy needs to be updated approximately every 5 years. There is the library materials selection and reconsideration materials policy – someone can object to something you have in the library and have the material reviewed. A committee reviews the material and makes the decision whether is appropriate for the library or needs to be removed. There is an appeal's process as well. The Weeding policy – the policy that is followed when weeding out old library books/materials. Dr. Atcherson asked who the committee is made up of. Mr. Caton said teachers and parents.

Dr. Atcherson moved to approve. Mrs. Pack seconded. Motion passed.

### **21-B-020 Motion to Approve the Equity Compliance Report**

Mr. Caton said this report is part of Cycle 2 that gives assurances in terms of equity – where Title funds are being used and following non- discrimination policies. It has to be signed by the board president and secretary.

Mr. Fagan moved to approve. Dr. Atcherson seconded. Motion passed.

### **Discussion Items**

#### Annual Bullying Report

The report is always based on the previous year. ASB had two incidences that were reported. ASB always tries to follow a progressive discipline policy to investigate the reports. Start with counseling the student, making them aware of what has been reported and it could rise to the point of bullying if continued. In both of the cases the initial counseling did not stop the negative interactions so further steps were taken which could include further counseling with school counselor or the Licensed Social Worker. If it still continues then there could be In School Suspension, then Out of School Suspension. This was done in both of these cases. When student comes back from OSS, the referral team meets to make decision about the student's future at the school. In one case, it resolved itself – no further negative interactions between the students. The student was referred to an outside counselor. The second case, the referral team did meet and decided ASBVI was not the place for this student and the student was referred back to their local school district. This is always a last resort. The report is posted on the website. Mrs. Pack asked how old the student was. Mr. Caton said he did not have the ages in the report because of confidentiality as small as the school is.

### **21-B-021 Motion to Approve the Bullying Report**

Mrs. Pack moved to approve. Mr. Fagan seconded. Motion passed.

## Superintendent Report

Mr. Caton said he would update on some things not found in the report.

Maranda Cole applied for a youth literacy grant through Dollar General and received a \$4,000 grant. It will be used in our library media center.

The first Family Engagement Plan literacy night is tonight via zoom at 6:00.

FBLA will conduct a car wash Saturday on campus from 11:00 – 3:00

APH annual meeting will be virtual again this year – he has signed up for several sessions

Council of School Services for the Blind will also be virtual – he will attend that as well

In the process of working with ADE on the Computer Science program – ADE will be visiting the campus to see what is actual being done in terms of computer science and coding.

Friends of ASB (similar to PTA) reorganized for the new school year – first meeting 9/16 by zoom

He has resumed meeting with staff on the first Friday of each month

Several teachers taking advantage of DESE teaching academies and other educational opportunities

These are programs offered through different universities and get a micro credential which comes out on their licensure. Two paraprofessionals attending the REACH University which is an online teaching program and through this program will attain a K-6 Sped teaching license.

Lori Cole, Teacher Supervisor, will be part of the Arch Ford Principal Prep program

AER Conference 9/23 & 24 via zoom – several teachers will be attending

Elementary staff have started assessing students using

STAR testing window opened 9/20

Students 3-6 years old continually being assessed though the Oregon Project

Intense reading intervention based on very specific reading assessments for the entire student body  
Elementary and Secondary teachers are attending PLC's using the book "The End of the Molasses Glasses".

A Block Party was held 9/16-students enjoyed socializing and eating from the Food Truck. It was sponsored by ASB Alumni Association.

Started using an interactive writing tool for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and above called "No Red Ink".

New psychological examiner – Joy Bess

Therapy sessions have begun face to face again this year

New Business teacher, Erica Holmes.

Education Lecture Series began on 9/17 – efforts to attract students to the field of education

Health Services – Vicki attended the Coordinated School Health Quarterly meeting via zoom

Vaccine Clinic held – 15 staff, students vaccinated

ASB still has open positions for RN & LPN – Vicki has held interviews

Cafeteria got a new display merchandiser

Cafeteria got new matching uniforms

2 Cook positions open

Child Nutrition Department have all been vaccinated

Birth to 3 Program gained 13 new referrals in August-they see an average of 80-90 babies a year

Birth to 3 have continued their visit throughout the state

**Superintendent Report continued:**

Campus Projects – the Cottage renovation is making progress. Most of the open ground areas have been covered

Fiber Optic lines upgrade project is about to finish up

Facilities Campus Assessment by ADE and Petit & Petit has been completed

Mrs. Pack asked if ASB was utilizing any of the services at School for the Deaf like audiologist as far as hearing aid repair. Mr. Caton said he thought they were and knows it has been done in the past and will continue as necessary. He said ASB has several that have hearing loss along with their blindness. If they don't have their Soundfield system working or don't have their hearing aids then they are missing out on learning.

Dr. McAllister was asked if there was time for public comment by Christine Stracener. She did not sign up as she did not know the procedure. Dr. McAllister allowed her to speak.

Mrs. Stracener stated she was the mother of Khloe Stracener, 2<sup>nd</sup> grader at ASBVI and she does have hearing loss and benefits from the Soundfield system. Mrs. Stracener said her greatest concern is her daughter – that she receives a fair, appropriate and quality education. ASBVI is a special abilities school and should be the very best place for a child with a visual impairment to attend. She accepted a position last year at the school as a teacher. One thing that is very scary is teacher retention. She said 6 teachers resigned prior to school starting and since then 3 more have resigned. She said it is very difficult to the administration and the teacher that choose to remain. The teachers that remain have to carry the wait of the teachers that have left. This frustration is felt by the students and in turn causes them a lot of anxiety. Mrs. Stracener went on to state facts about salaries of teacher who left getting significant raises; teachers who took pay cuts to teach at ASBVI and personal information about herself. She ended by saying they needed someone to stand and fight for them.

Dr. McAllister thanked Mrs. Stracener. Mrs. Pack said it was something the board could talk about. Dr. McAllister said the board would go into Executive Session at 6:25 pm. Board meeting resumed at 8:05. Dr. McAllister stated effective immediately:

- 1) Anyone who is a department head goes directly to Superintendent
- 2) It is no longer acceptable for students to check out from the Infirmary
- 3) A paraprofessional has to take students to the infirmary

The board went back into Executive Session at 8:10 and the meeting resumed at 8:18.


Dr. McAllister stated during the Executive Session, the board made the decision about medical records. Advised Mr. Caton to post HIPPA violation on medical records.

The meeting adjourned at 8:23.



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Dr. John McAllister, Chair



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Faith McLaughlin, Secretary

**Board of Trustees Meeting  
Arkansas School for the Deaf  
Arkansas School for the Blind  
Page 8  
September 21, 2021**